اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 44 – Ad-Dukhan (The Smoke)

سُوْرَةُ الدُّخَانِ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

حٰمٓ ﴿١﴾

(44-1) Ha'. Mim.

وَالْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ ﴿٢﴾

(44-2) By the Clear Book.

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ فِيْ لَيْلَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ اِنَّا كُنَّا مُنْذِرِيْنَ ﴿٣﴾

(44-3) We revealed it on a Blessed Night, for We were intent on warning; (1)

(1) The meaning of taking an oath by the lucid Scripture has been explained in (E.N.1 of Surah Az-Zukhruf). Here also what has been sworn by is that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not the author of this Book but We are the author, and this Book by itself is enough to provide a proof of that. Furthermore, it has been said that the night in which it was revealed was full of blessings. That is, the foolish and ignorant people, who have no idea of their own wellbeing or otherwise, regard the revelation of this Book as a disaster for themselves and are deeply anxious as how to get rid of it. But, as a matter of fact, the Hour when We decided to send down this Book to arouse the heedless, was highly blessed for them and for all mankind.

Some commentators have expressed the opinion that the meaning of sending down the Quran in that night is that its revelation began during that night, and some others think that the whole of the Quran was transferred from Umm-ul- Kitab and entrusted to the bearers of revelation (angels), and then revealed

to the Prophet (peace be upon him) as and when required and demanded by the occasion and circumstances during 23 years. As to what actually happened Allah alone has the best knowledge.

The night implies the same night which has been called lailat-ul-qadr in (Surah Al-Qadr, Ayat 1), There it has been said: We sent it down in a night of glory, and here: We sent it down in a blessed night. It was the night of the month of Ramadhan, as it is said in(Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 185): Ramadhan is the month in which the Quran was revealed.

فِيۡ لَيۡلَةٍ مُّبٰرَكَةٍ اِنَّا كُنَّا مُنۡذِرِيۡنَ ۚ﴿۴﴾ فِيۡهَا يُفۡرَقُ كُلُّ اَمۡرٍ حَكِيۡمٍ

(44-4) (We revealed it on the Night) wherein every matter is wisely determined (2)

(2) The word amr-in-hakim as used in the text has two meanings:

(1) That the command is entirely based on wisdom: there is no likelihood of any error or weakness in it.
(2) That it is a firm and stable decision: it lies in no one's power to change it.

اَمۡرًا مِّنۡ عِنۡدِنَا ؕ اِنَّا كُنَّا مُرۡسِلِيۡنَ ۚ﴿۵﴾

(44-5) by Our command. (3) Verily, We were set to send a Messenger

(3) In Surah Al-Qadr, this same thing has been expressed thus: The angels and the Spirit (Angel Gabriel) descend in it with every decree, by the leave of their Lord. This shows that it is such a night in the divine administration of Allah in which He decides the destinies of the individuals and nations and countries and entrusts His decisions to His angels, who then implement them accordingly. Some commentators among whom Ikrimah is most prominent, have been involved in the misunderstanding that this is the 15th night of Shaban, for in some traditions it has been said that the destinies of people are decided during that night. But Ibn

Abbas, Ibn Umar, Mujahid, Qatadah, Hasan Basri, Saeed bin Jubair, Ibn Zaid, Abu Malik, Dahhak and many other commentators agree that this is the same night of Ramadan, which has been called lailat-ul-qadr, for the Quran itself has stated this, and where any Quranic statement exists, no other view can be formed on the basis of random reports. Ibn Kathir says: The traditions that Imam Zuhri has related from Uthman bin Muhammad that destinies are decided from one Shaban to the next Shaban is an indirect tradition and such traditions cannot be cited as against the clear texts of the Quran. Qadi Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi says: No Hadith in respect of the 15th of Shaban is reliable, either in respect of its merit, or about this that decisions with regard to the destinies are taken in it; therefore, they do not merit attention, (Ahkam ul-Quran).

رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ۙ﴿۶﴾

(44-6) as a Mercy from your Lord. [4] Surely He is All-Hearing, All-Seeing, [5]

(4) That is, it was not only a demand of wisdom to send a Messenger with this Book but also of Allah’s mercy, for He is the Provider, and Provider requires that not only should arrangements be made for nourishing the servants’ bodies but they should also be afforded right guidance by knowledge, that they should be made aware of the distinction between right and wrong and that they should not be left wandering in darkness.

(5) The object of mentioning these two attributes of Allah in this context is to warn the people of the truth that He alone can give correct knowledge for He alone knows all the realities. Not to speak of one man, even if all men join to determine a way of life for themselves, there can be no guaranty of its being the right way, for even the entire mankind together cannot become all-hearing and all knowing. It does not lie in its power to comprehend all those realities whose knowledge is essential for determining a correct way of life. This knowledge is only with Allah. He alone is All-Hearing and All-Knowing. Therefore, He

alone can tell what is guidance for man and what is falsehood, what is the truth and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil.

رَبِّ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّوْقِنِيْنَ ۝٧

(44-7) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and of all that is between them: if you would only have sure faith. (6)

(6) The Arabs themselves admitted that Allah alone is the Lord (Master and Provider) of the Universe and of everything in it. Therefore, it has been said to them: If you are not admitting only verbally but are really conscious of His being the Provider and are convinced of His being the Master, you should admit that:

(1) It is the very demand of His Mercifulness and Providence that He should send a Book and a Messenger for the guidance of man.

(2) It is His right as the Master and your duty as His servants that you should obey every guidance and submit to every command that comes from Him.

لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيٖ وَ يُمِيْتُ ؕ رَبُّكُمْ وَ رَبُّ اٰبَآئِكُمُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ۝٨

(44-8) There is no god but He: (7) He gives life and causes death. (8) He is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers of yore. (9)

(7) The real God Who alone has the right that He should be worshiped and served.

(8) That is, there is no god other than Allah, nor can there be. Therefore, it is against reason that you should disdain the worship of Him Who breathed life into dead matter and made you a living man. And Who possesses full powers to keep you alive as long as He likes and bring your life to an end whenever He likes. So, it is against reason that you serve any other than Him, or start worshiping others besides Him.

(9) There is a subtle allusion in it to this: He is also Lord of those of your ancestors who took other gods besides Allah; they

had not done the right thing by giving up their real Lord and serving others that you should be justified in imitating them and regard their conduct as an argument for the soundness of your creed. They ought to have served only Him, because He alone is their Lord.

بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ يَّلْعَبُوْنَ ۝٩

(44-9) (But the fact is, they lack certainty) and frolic about in doubt. (10)

(10) In this brief sentence an allusion has been made to an important truth. Even atheists or polytheists do come across occasions when their being from within says: There is somewhere some weakness in the creed that we have adopted. The atheist may apparently be very firm in his denial of God, his heart at one or the other time does bear the testimony that this wonderful and wise system which extends from the particle of dust to the galaxies and from a blade of grass to the creation of man, could not come into existence without an All-Wise Designer. Likewise, a polytheist may be deeply submerged in his polytheism, his heart also sometimes cries out: Those whom you have adopted as deities cannot be God. But this testimony of the heart neither leads the atheist nor the polytheist to the conviction about the existence and Oneness of God, nor to conviction and satisfaction about their creed of atheism and polytheism itself. Instead, their religion, in fact, is based on doubt, no matter how convinced they might appear to be of its truth. As for the question: Why doesn't this doubt make them restless and why don't they seek the truth seriously so as to obtain a satisfactory ground for their convictions? The answer is: they lack seriousness in religious matters. What they really regard as important are the worldly earnings and acquisitions and their enjoyment, in search of which they expend all their powers and abilities of the heart and mind and body. As for the religious matters, they are in fact no more than fun, a mere pastime, amusement, or a mental diversion for them, for which they cannot spare even a few moments of serious study. Religious rites are being performed as an entertainment; discussions about denial and atheism are being engaged in as an

amusement. No one can spare a few moments from his worldly pursuits to consider whether he has turned away from the truth, and if so, what would be its consequences.

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَاْتِى السَّمَآءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٠﴾

(44-10) So watch for the Day when the sky will come down with a pall of smoke,

يَّغْشَى النَّاسَ ؕ هٰذَا عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١١﴾

(44-11) enveloping people. That will be a grievous scourge.

رَبَّنَا اكْشِفْ عَنَّا الْعَذَابَ اِنَّا مُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾

(44-12) (People will then say): “Our Lord, remove this scourge from us; we shall believe.”

اَنّٰى لَهُمُ الذِّكْرٰى وَ قَدْ جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٣﴾

(44-13) But how will they take heed? Such are they that a Messenger [11] came to them clearly expounding the Truth,

(11) Rasul-i-mubin has two meanings:

(1) His being a Messenger is quite evident from his character, his morals and his works.
(2) He has made every effort to make the truth plain and clear.

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَ قَالُوْا مُعَلَّمٌ مَّجْنُوْنٌ ﴿١٤﴾

(44-14) yet they turned away from him and said: “This is a well-tutored madman.” [12]

(12) What they meant was: this was a simple man, some others have incited and deceived him. They secretly forge and teach him verses of the Quran, and he comes and recites them before the

people. They sit back in peace and leave him alone to receive the abuses and be pelted with stones. They would make a mockery of all the arguments, the admonitions and the serious teachings which the Prophet (peace be upon him) had been presenting since several years and was growing weary. Neither they paid any attention to the rational things being expressed in the Quran nor recognized the extraordinary character of the man who was presenting them, nor took any trouble to think what nonsense they were uttering when they imputed such things to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Obviously, if there had been another person who gave secret instruction to the Prophet (peace be upon him), he could not have remained hidden from Khadijah and Abu Bakr, Ali and Zaid bin Harithah and other early Muslims, who were the closest and constant companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Then, how it is that these very people only became his most devoted and dedicated followers, whereas if the business of prophethood had depended on the secret instruction of some other person, these very people would have been in the forefront to oppose him (For further explanation, see (Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 103); (Surah Al-Furqan, Ayats 4-6) and the corresponding E.Ns).

اِنَّا كَاشِفُوا الْعَذَابِ قَلِ ۭ يۗلًا اِنَّكُمْ عَآىِٕدُوْنَ ۝١٥

(44-15) Yet We will hold the scourge back for a while, (but no sooner than We will do so) you will revert to your old ways.

يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَ ۝ الْكُبْرٰى ۚ اِنَّا مُنْتَقِمُوْنَ ۝١٦

(44-16) The Day when We shall seize them with a mighty seizing, that will be the Day on which We shall inflict upon you full retribution. (13)

(13) The commentators have seriously disputed the meaning of these verses, and the difference of opinion existed even in the time of the companions. Masruq, the well-known student of Abdullah bin Masud, states: One day when we entered the mosque of Kufah, we saw a preacher addressing the people. He recited the verse: Yauma tatissama- u bidukhan-im-mubin, then

asked: Do you know what kind of smoke it is? This smoke will appear on the Day of Resurrection and will make the disbelievers and the hypocrites blind and deaf, but the believers will be affected only to the extent as if they had caught cold. Hearing this commentary we went to Abdullah bin Masud and reported to him what the preacher had said. Abdullah at that time was lying down. On hearing this commentary he sat up startled and said: When a person does not have the knowledge, he should ask those who have it. The fact is that when the people of the Quraish went on refusing to accept Islam and continued to oppose the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Prophet (peace be upon him) prayed: O God, help me with a famine like the famine of Joseph (peace be upon him); consequently, a very severe famine overtook Makkah and the people were forced to eat bones, skins and carrion. The conditions became so bad that whoever looked up to the sky would see nothing but smoke due to intensity of hunger. At last, Abu Sufyan came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said: You tell the people to treat their kindred kindly, your own people are starving, kindly pray to God to remove this calamity. This was the time when the people of the Quraish had started saying: O God, if You remove this torment from us, we will believe. This same event has been referred to in these verses; and the severest blow implies the calamity that was inflicted on the Quraish in the Battle of Badr. This tradition has been related by Imam Ahmad, Bukhari Tirmidhi, Nasai, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim from Masruq with several chains of authorities. Besides Masruq, Ibrahim Nakhai Qatadah, Asim and Amir have also related that Abdullah bin Masud had given the same commentary of this verse. Therefore there cannot be any doubt that Ibn Masud actually held this same opinion. Among the immediate followers of the companions, Mujahid, Qatadah. Abul Aliyah, Muqatil, Ibrahim Nakhai, Dahhak and Atiyyah al-Aufi and others have also concurred with Ibn Masud in this commentary.

On the contrary, scholars like Ali, Ibn Umar, Ibn Abbas, Abu Saeed Khudri, Zaid bin Ali, and Hasan Basri say that in these verses mention has been made of the time just before Resurrection, and the smoke that has been foretold will envelop the earth at that time. This commentary is further strengthened

by the traditions that have been reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him). Hudhaifah bin Asid al-Ghifari says: One day when we were talking about Resurrection, the Prophet (peace be upon him) came out to us and said: Resurrection will not be established till ten signs have appeared one after the other: Rising of the sun in the west, smoke, the beast, emergence of Gog and Magog, descent of Jesus son of Mary, sinking of the earth in the East, in the West and in the Arabian Peninsula, and the appearance of a fire from Yemen, which will drive the people away. (Muslim) This is confirmed by Abu Malik Ashari's tradition which has been related by Ibn Jarir and Tabarani, and Abu Said Khudri's tradition which has been related by Ibn Abi Hatim. Both these traditions show that the Prophet (peace be upon him) regarded the smoke as one of the signs of Resurrection and also said that when that smoke will spread, it will affect the believer only like a cold, but will infuse every nerve of the disbeliever and come out from every part of his body.

A study of the verses under consideration can remove the disparity between the two commentaries. As for the commentary of Abdullah bin Masud, it is a fact that a severe famine had hit Makkah resulting from the Prophet's (peace be upon him) prayer and it had unnerved the disbelievers considerably and they had requested the Prophet (peace be upon him) to pray for its removal, as referred to at several places in the Quran. (See (Surah Al- Anam, Ayat 43); (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 94-95); (Surah Younus, Ayat 21); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayats 75-77) and the corresponding E.Ns). In these verses also there is a clear pointer to the same conditions. The disbeliever are saying: Our Lord, remove this torment from us, we will believe. Allah is saying: How can they rid themselves of their heedlessness? Even when a manifest Messenger came to them, they paid no heed to him, and said: He is a madman taught by others. Then Allah is saying: Were We to remove the torment a little, you would revert to the same that you were doing before. All this can be relevant only if it refers to the conditions of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) time. To apply them to what will happen near the time of Resurrection, is not correct. Therefore, in view of this, Abdullah bin Masud's commentary seems to be correct, but its this part that "the smoke" also had appeared in

that very time, in that when the people in their extreme state of hunger looked up to the sky, they could see nothing but smoke, does not seem to be correct. It also does not conform to the apparent words of the Quran and is against the traditions as well. The Quran does not say: The sky brought forth the smoke and it spread over the people; but it says: Wait for the day when the sky will appear with a visible smoke, and it will envelop mankind. A study of the subsequent verses clearly points to this meaning: When you do not believe even after the Messenger's admonition, nor take heed from the warning given in the shape of the famine, then you should wait for Resurrection. At that time when you see your doom confronting you, you will fully realize what was the truth and what was falsehood. Therefore, as for the smoke, the correct view is that it has nothing to do with the time of the famine, but it is a sign of Resurrection and the same is also confirmed by the Hadith.

وَ لَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَ جَآءَهُمْ رَسُوْلٌ كَرِيْمٌ ۙ﴿۱۷﴾

(44-17) Indeed before that We subjected the Pharaonites to the same test. A noble Messenger (14) came to them

(14) The words rasul-un karim in the original imply a man who is characterized with most noble traits of character and highly praiseworthy qualities.

اَنْ اَدُّوْۤا اِلَيَّ عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنِّيْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ اَمِيْنٌ ۙ﴿۱۸﴾

(44-18) (and said): (15) "Deliver to me Allah's servants. (16) I am a trustworthy Messenger to you, (17)

(15) One should note that the sayings of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) being cited here, are not parts of a continuous address delivered by him at any one time, but they are a summary in a few sentences of what he said to Pharaoh and his courtiers on different occasions during many years. (For the details, see (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 103-136); (Surah Younus, Ayats 75-92); (Surah Ta Ha, Ayats 45-76); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 10-68); (Surah An-Naml, Ayats 7-14); (Surah

Al-Qasas, Ayats 32-42); (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayats 23-46); (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayats 46-56); and the corresponding E.Ns.)

(16) That is, leave the children of Israel to go with me. This demand is synonymous with the demand made in (Surah Al- Araf, Ayat 105); (Surah Ta Ha, Ayat 47)and (Surah Ash- Shura, Ayat 17). Another translation that has been reported from Abdullah ibn Abbas is: Servants of Allah, fulfill my right, i.e. accept what I say, believe in me, follow my guidance. This is my right on you from Allah. The following sentence: I am a trustworthy Messenger to you is more in keeping with the second meaning.

(17) That is, I am a reliable Messenger: I do not forge anything from myself, nor am I the one who would present something based on personal interest or desire, or forge a command or law, in the name of Allah. Rest assured that I shall convey to you intact only that which my Sender has commanded. It should be noted that these two sentences belong to the time when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) first started preaching Allah's message.

وَّ اَنْ لَّا تَعْلُوْا عَلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اٰتِيْكُمْ بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿١٩﴾

(44-19) and do not exalt yourselves in defiance of Allah. I have come to you with a clear authority (18) (as a Messenger).

(18) In other words, it means: Your rebellion against me is in fact rebellion against Allah, for what annoys you is not what I say but what Allah says, and I only present those things as His Messenger. If you doubt whether I have really been sent by Hun or not, I present before you a clear authority of my appointment from Allah. This authority does not imply any one miracle but a long series of the miracles which the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) continued to show to Pharaoh and his people for years since the time he came in the court of Pharaoh till his last days in Egypt. Whatever sign they denied, was followed up by a greater sign of authority by him. (For explanation, see (E.Ns 42, 43 of Surah Az-Zukhruf).

وَ اِنِّ ۪ ی ۫ عُذْتُ بِرَبِّیۡ وَ رَبِّکُمْ اَنۡ تَرْجُمُوۡنِ ﴿۲۰﴾

(44-20) I have taken refuge with my Lord and your Lord lest you should attack me with stones.

وَ اِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوۡا لِیۡ فَاعْتَزِلُوۡنِ ﴿۲۱﴾

(44-21) But if you do not believe what I say, leave me alone [19] (and desist from laying hands on me).”

(19) This was said at the time when, as against all the signs presented by the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), Pharaoh was still showing stubbornness, but was feeling upset and confounded at the realization that all classes of the Egyptian society were rapidly being influenced by those signs. In that period, first of all he made the speech before his packed court as mentioned in (Verses 51-53 of Surah Az- Zukhruf (see E.Ns 45 to 49)), then, when he felt the ground slipping from under his feet, he made up his mind to kill Allah’s Messenger. At that time the Prophet (peace be upon him) said the words as mentioned in (Surah Al-Mumin, Ayat 27) to the effect: I have taken refuge in my Lord and your Lord against every arrogant person who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning. Here, the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) is referring to that same thing and telling Pharaoh and his chiefs: Look, I have sought Allah’s refuge against all sorts of violence from you, now you cannot harm me. But if you wish yourselves well, do not harm me. If you do not want to believe what I say, you may not, but you should never lay your hands on me, otherwise you will meet with catastrophic consequences.

فَدَعَا رَبَّہٗۤ اَنَّ ہٰۤؤُلَآءِ قَوْمٌ مُّجْرِمُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾

(44-22) Then he called upon his Lord: “These are a criminal people.” [20]

(20) This is the final report that the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) presented before his Lord, saying: These are the people who are criminals. That is, their being the criminals has

been confirmed finally and absolutely. They have exhausted every chance of concession and respite for reformation. It is time that the final fatal decision be passed against them.

فَاَسْرِ بِعِبَادِیْ لَیْلًا اِنَّكُمْ مُّتَّبَعُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾

(44-23) (He was told): “Set out with My servants by night (21) for you will certainly be pursued. (22)

(21) With my servants: With all those people who have believed, including both the Israelites and the Egyptian Copts who had become Muslims since the time of the Prophet Joseph till that of the Prophet Moses (peace be upon them), and those also who had been influenced by the signs shown by Moses (peace be upon him) and His preaching and accepted Islam from among the Egyptians. (For explanation, see (Surah Yousuf: E.N. 68).

(22) This was the initial command given to the prophet Moses (peace be upon him) for the migration. (For explanation, see (Surah Ta Ha, Ayat 77); (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 52-68) and the corresponding E.Ns).

وَاتْرُكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾

(44-24) And leave the sea behind you as calm as ever. Surely they are an army that is doomed to be drowned.” (23)

(23) This command was given when the Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had crossed the sea along with his caravan and wanted that he should restore the sea to its former state by smiting it with the staff so that Pharaoh and his hosts should not pursue them on the dry path created by the miracle. At that times it was said: Leave the sea divided as it is, so that Pharaoh and his armies should descend into it. Then the sea will be restored and they will be drowned all together.

كَمْ تَرَكُوْا مِنْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُيُوْنٍ ﴿۲۵﴾

(44-25) How many gardens did they leave behind, and how many fountains

وَّ زُرُوۡعٍ وَّ مَقَامٍ كَرِيۡمٍ ۙ﴿۲۶﴾

(44-26) and sown fields and splendid mansions,

وَّ نَعۡمَةٍ كَانُوۡا فِيۡهَا فٰكِهِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۲۷﴾

(44-27) and the life of ease in which they took delight!

كَذٰلِكَ ۫ وَ اَوۡرَثۡنٰهَا قَوۡمًا اٰخَرِيۡنَ ﴿۲۸﴾

(44-28) Thus it was; and We made another people inherit all that. [24]

(24) Hasan Basri says that “other people” here implies the children of Israel, whom Allah made heirs of the land of Egypt after Pharaoh’s people, and Qatadah says it implies the other people who inherited Egypt after the people of Pharaoh, for the history does not make any mention that the Israelites ever returned to Egypt after the exodus and inherited it. This same point has been disputed by the later commentators also. (For a detailed discussion, see (Surah Ash Shuara, Ayats 57-59) and the E.Ns on it).

فَمَا بَكَتۡ عَلَيۡهِمُ السَّمَآءُ وَ الۡاَرۡضُ وَمَا كَانُوۡا مُنۡظَرِيۡنَ ﴿۲۹﴾

(44-29) Then neither the sky shed tears over them nor the earth. [25] They were granted no respite.

(25) That is, when they were the rulers, they were known for their glory and grandeur, hymns were sung of their praise, flatterers flattered them to such an extent as if the whole world was devoted to them for their excellences and indebted to them for their favors and there was none more popular in the world than they. But when they fell, there was none to shed a tear on their fall, rather the world felt relieved that a cause of distress had been removed. Obviously, they had neither done any good to the people that the dwellers of the earth might weep on them, nor

anything for the sake of Allah's pleasure that the dwellers of the heavens might grieve over their ruin. As long as Allah continued to give them respite by His will, they enjoyed life as they pleased; but when they transgressed all limits in their crimes, they were cast aside like rubbish.

وَلَقَدْ نَجَّيْنَا بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَاۤءِيْلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِيْنِۙ ٣٠

(44-30) Thus did We deliver the Children of Israel from the humiliating chastisement,

مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ ۗ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ عَالِيًا مِّنَ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَۙ ٣١

(44-31) from Pharaoh (26) who was most prominent among the prodigals. (27)

(26) That is, Pharaoh by himself was an abasing torment for them and all other torments were indeed offshoots of the same great torment.

(27) There is a subtle satire in it on the chiefs of the disbelieving Quraish. It means to say this: You do not enjoy any place of distinction among the transgressors against Allah. Pharaoh indeed was a rebel of the highest order who was ruling on the throne of the largest kingdom of the time as a god. When he was swept away like straw, how can you prevent the divine wrath?

وَلَقَدِ اخْتَرْنٰهُمْ عَلٰى عِلْمٍ عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَۚ ٣٢

(44-32) We knowingly exalted them (i.e., the Children of Israel) above other peoples of the world (28)

(28) That is, Allah was well aware both of the qualities and of the weaknesses of the children of Israel. He had not chosen them blindly. For when he chose them from among the contemporary nations to become the standard bearers of His message and His Tauhid, they were the most suitable people in His knowledge for the purpose.

وَ اٰتَيۡنٰهُم مِّنَ الۡاٰيٰتِ مَا فِيۡهِ بَلٰٓـؤٌا مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

(44-33) and bestowed upon them the Signs wherein lay an evident test for them. (29)

(29) For explanation, see (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 49-74); (Surah An-Nisa, Ayats 153-160); (Surah Al-Maidah, Ayats 20-26); (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 138-171); (Surah Ta Ha, Ayats 80-97) and the corresponding E.Ns.

اِنَّ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ لَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ ﴿٣٤﴾

(44-34) Indeed these people say:

اِنۡ هِىَ اِلَّا مَوۡتَتُنَا الۡاُوۡلٰى وَمَا نَحۡنُ بِمُنۡشَرِيۡنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

(44-35) “This is our first and only death, and we shall never be raised again. (30)

(30) That is, when we die the first time, we shall be annihilated: there will be no other life after that.

فَاۡتُوۡا بِاٰبَآئِنَاۤ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿٣٦﴾

(44-36) Bring back to us our fathers if you are truthful.” (31)

(31) This was their reasoning: We have never seen a dead person resurrected to life. Therefore, we believe that there will be no other life after death. If you claim that there will be another life, then resurrect our forefathers from their graves, so that we are convinced of the life after death. If you do not do this, we would think that your claim is false. This was, as they thought, a very strong argument for the refutation of life after death, whereas it was absurd. Nobody had told them that the dead would return to this very world after being raised back to life, nor the Prophet (peace be upon him), nor any Muslim had ever claimed that he could raise the dead back to life.

اَ ۟هُمْ خَیْرٌ اَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ ۙ وَّ الَّذِیْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ؕ اَهْلَكْنٰهُمْ ۫ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا
مُجْرِمِیْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾

(44-37) Are these better or the people of Tubba [32] and those who went before them? We destroyed them for they were a criminal people. [33]

(32) Tubba was the title of the kings of the Himyarites, like the titles of Khosroes, Caesar, Pharaoh etc. which have been associated with the kings of different countries. They were a branch of the Sabaeans, who attained domination over Saba in 115 B.C. and ruled it until 300 A.D. They have been a well-known people of Arabia for centuries. (For details, see (E.N. 37 of Surah Saba).

(33) This is the first answer to the disbelievers' objection; it means: Any individual group or nation which denies the Hereafter becomes criminal. Perversion of the morals is its inevitable result, and human history bears evidence that whichever nation adopted this view of life ultimately perished. As for the question: Are they better or the people of Tubba or the people before them? It means this: The disbelievers of Makkah have not been able to attain to the prosperity and splendor that became the lot of the people of Tubba and of the people of Saba and of the people of Pharaoh and others before them. But this material prosperity and worldly splendor could not save them from the consequences of their moral degeneration. How will then the chiefs of the Quraish be saved from destruction on the strength of their puny resources and wealth? (For details, see (E.Ns 25 to 36 of Surah Saba).

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ وَمَا بَیْنَهُمَا لٰعِبِیْنَ ﴿۳۸﴾

(44-38) It was not in idle sport that We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them.

مَا خَلَقْنٰهُمَاۤ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا یَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۳۹﴾

(44-39) We did not create them except in Truth. But most of them do not know. [34]

(34) This is the second answer to their objection; it means: Whoever denies life after death and the rewards and punishments of the hereafter, in fact, regards this world as a plaything. This is why he has formed the view that man, after raising all sorts of the storms in the world, will end up in the dust one day and none of his good or bad acts will bear any fruit. The fact, however, is that this universe is the creation of an All-Wise Creator and not of a frivolous being, and it cannot be expected from an All-Wise Creator that he would perform a useless and vain act. (For a detailed explanation, see (Surah Al-Anaam, Ayat 73); (Surah Younus, Ayats 5-6); (Surah Al-Anbiya, Ayats 16-18); (Surah Al-Muminun, Ayat 115); (Surah Ar-Rum, Ayats 8-9) and the corresponding E.Ns).

اِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيْقٰتُهُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ۙ﴿۴۰﴾

(44-40) The Day of Final Decision is the appointed time for all; (35)

(35) This is the answer to their demand: Bring back our forefathers if you are truthful. It means: Life-after-death is not a trivial matter, it cannot be that whenever somebody denies it, a dead person may he raised immediately from the graveyard and presented before him. For it a time has been fixed by the Lord of the worlds, when He will resurrect to life all the former and the latter generations, gather them together in His court and will decide their cases. You may believe in it or may not, but this will in any case happen on its own pre-ordained time. If you believe in it, it will be to your own advantage, for, being forewarned, you will make preparations to fare well in that court. If you do not believe in it, you will incur loss for yourselves, for you will spend your whole life in the misunderstanding that good and evil are confined only to this worldly life; after death there is going to be no court where our good or bad deeds might have to be judged for any permanent results.

يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِىْ مَوْلًى عَنْ مَّوْلًى شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ۙ﴿۴۱﴾

(44-41) the Day when a friend shall be of no avail to his friend [36] nor shall they be helped,

(36) The Arabic word maula is used for a person who supports another person either because of kinship, or friendship, or some other relationship.

اِلَّا مَنۡ رَّحِمَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الرَّحِيۡمُ ﴿۴۲﴾

(44-42) except those to whom Allah shows mercy. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Compassionate. (37)

(37) These sentences portray the nature of the court that will be established on the Day of Decision. It will be a court where nobody's help or support will help rescue any culprit nor have his sentence reduced. All powers will rest with the real Sovereign Whose decisions cannot be withheld from being enforced nor influenced by any power. It will entirely depend on His own discretion whether He forgives somebody mercifully, or awards him a lesser punishment. It indeed behooves Him to exercise justice mercifully and not mercilessly, but whatever decision He gives in any case, will be enforced entirely and completely. After this portrayal of the nature of the divine court, in the following few sentences it has been stated what will be the fate of those who will be found guilty in that court, and what will be conferred on those about whom it will be established that they had been refraining from Allah's disobedience in the world out of fear of Him.

اِنَّ شَجَرَتَ الزَّقُّوۡمِ ﴿۴۳﴾

(44-43) The tree of al-Zaqqum [38]

(38) For details of zaqqum, see (E.N. 34 of Surah As-Safat).

طَعَامُ الۡاَثِيۡمِ ﴿۴۴﴾

(44-44) shall be the food of the sinful.

كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِيْ فِي الْبُطُوْنِ ﴿٤٥﴾

(44-45) Like dregs of oil, [39] it will boil in their bellies

(39) The word al-muhl in the original has several meanings: molten metal, pus-blood, molten tar, lava, dregs of oil. These are the different meanings given by the lexicographers and commentators, but if this word is understood with reference to zaqqum (cactus), it may mean its juice which will probably be like the dregs of oil.

كَغَلْيِ الْحَمِيْمِ ﴿٤٦﴾

(44-46) like boiling water.

خُذُوْهُ فَاعْتِلُوْهُ اِلٰى سَوَآءِ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٤٧﴾

(44-47) “Seize him and drag him to the middle of the Blazing Fire,

ثُمَّ صُبُّوْا فَوْقَ رَاْسِهٖ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيْمِ ﴿٤٨﴾

(44-48) then pour boiling water over his head as chastisement.

ذُقْ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْكَرِيْمُ ﴿٤٩﴾

(44-49) Taste this, you are a person mighty and noble!

اِنَّ هٰذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَمْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾

(44-50) This is what you used to doubt.”

اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ مَقَامٍ اَمِيْنٍ ﴿٥١﴾

(44-51) Verily the God-fearing shall be in a secure place [40]

(40) A secure place: A place safe from every kind of fear, grief, worry and danger, hardship and trouble. According to a Hadith, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: It will be proclaimed to the dwellers of Paradise: You will remain in good health, will never fall ill, will live forever, will never die, will ever remain happy and prosperous and will never meet with a misfortune, will ever remain youthful, will never become old. (Muslim, on the authority of Abu Hurairah and Abu Saeed Khudri).

فِیۡ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ عُیُوۡنٍ ﴿۵۲﴾

(44-52) amidst gardens and springs.

یَّلۡبَسُوۡنَ مِنۡ سُنۡدُسٍ وَّ اِسۡتَبۡرَقٍ مُّتَقٰبِلِیۡنَ ﴿۵۳﴾

(44-53) Attired in silk and brocade, (41) they shall be arrayed face to face.

(41) Sundus and istabraq in the original are fine silk cloth and thick silk cloth respectively.

کَذٰلِکَ وَ زَوَّجۡنٰہُمۡ بِحُوۡرٍ عِیۡنٍ ﴿۵۴﴾

(44-54) Thus shall it be: and We shall espouse them to fair, wide-eyed maidens. (42)

(42) In the original, hur-un ein means fair complexioned, large-eyed women. (For further explanation, see (E.Ns 28 and 29 of Surah As-Safat).

یَدۡعُوۡنَ فِیۡہَا بِکُلِّ فَاکِہَۃٍ اٰمِنِیۡنَ ﴿۵۵﴾

(44-55) While resting in security, they shall call for all kinds of fruit. (43)

(43) That is, they will order the attendants in Paradise to bring anything they would like in any measure they would demand, and it will be presented before them. In this world, a man cannot ask for a thing in an inn, or even his own things in his own house, with

the freedom and satisfaction as he will ask for these in Paradise. For, in the world nothing is found anywhere in unlimited measure, whatever man uses here, he has to pay for it. In Paradise, things will belong to Allah, and the servants will enjoy full freedom to use them. Neither will there be the danger of the failure of the supply, nor the necessity of a bill to pay.

لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولَىٰ ۖ وَوَقَاهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٥٦﴾

(44-56) They shall not taste death except the death in this world. And Allah will save them from the chastisement of Hell (44)

(44) Two things are worthy of notice in this verse.

First, after mentioning the blessings of Paradise, special mention has been made of being secure from Hell separately whereas a person's entry into Paradise by itself amounts to his being safe from Hell. This is because man can feel the worth of the reward of obedience fully only when he is informed what end the disobedient people have met and from what evil end he himself has ban saved.

Secondly, Allah is mentioning those people's safety from Hell and their entry into Paradise as a result of His own grace. This is meant to warn man of the truth that this success cannot be achieved by any person unless he is blessed by Allah's grace. Although man will be rewarded for his own good deeds, in the first place he cannot do good unless favored by Allah's succor; then even the best deed that man is able to perform, cannot be absolutely perfect and none can claim that it is flawless and faultless. It is only Allah's bounty that He should overlook the servant's weaknesses and defects in his actions and accept his services and bless him with rewards; otherwise if He resorts to minute accountability, no one can dare claim to win Paradise only on the strength of his own deeds. The same thing has been said by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in a Hadith to the effect: Act and try to act as righteously as you possibly can, but know that the action of a person alone will not make him enter Paradise. It

was asked: What about your own action, O Messenger of Allah? He replied: Yes, even I won't enter Paradise on the strength of my actions, unless of course, my Lord covers me up in His mercy.

فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ۚ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿٥٧﴾

(44-57) as a favor from your Lord. That is the great triumph.

فَاِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنٰهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾

(44-58) (O Prophet), We have made this Book easy in your tongue so that they may take heed.

فَارْتَقِبْ اِنَّهُمْ مُّرْتَقِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾

(44-59) Wait, then; they too are waiting. (45)

(45) That is, if they do not accept the admonition even now, you should wait to see how they are visited by their doom; and they are also waiting to see what becomes of the message that you are giving them.